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U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than three million members of the National Education Association, we would like to share our views on the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act (H.R. 803) in advance of consideration by the full House of Representatives. We urge you to vote NO on H.R. 803 in its current form. Votes associated with H.R. 803 may be included in the NEA Legislative Report Card for the 113th Congress.

Workforce development – helping people acquire the skills to thrive and survive in the 21st century economy – is a goal we all share. It is in our nation’s long-term best interests to ensure that all potential workers have the skills and training they need to reach their full potential and contribute to a vibrant economy. However, without significant changes, we do not believe that H.R. 803 can provide the infrastructure necessary to help make this vision a reality.

To improve the underlying legislation, we urge you to vote YES on an amendment by Representative Tierney to make broad changes to strengthen, modernize, and promote innovation in the existing workforce investment system; maintain current programs and funding streams that are critical for vulnerable populations; and expand the role of community colleges in the workforce development system.

Our specific concerns about H.R. 803 include the:

- **Proposed consolidation of categorical programs and their funding streams.** Unified statewide plans, which are allowed under current law, encourage collaboration while maintaining programmatic focus and funding. In contrast, the proposed consolidation could lead to reduced funding for targeted programs that provide job training and other essential services for the most vulnerable. We strongly oppose the bill’s overall approach to consolidation and specifically oppose inclusion of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act in the consolidated fund.

- **Failure to require the input of educators and labor unions to the workforce investment system.** Throughout U.S. history, labor unions have ensured that policies impacting workers are fair, prudent, and benefit the nation and workers themselves. It is undemocratic to create policy-making bodies that impact workers, such as workforce investment boards, without ensuring a voice for workers – in this case, the educators who provide training and services for community college students, at-risk youth, and adult education students. Community colleges should also be specifically included in state and local workforce boards; their role should include consultation with faculty and staff who provide education and job training services.
- **Approach to funding the One Stop System.** The current framework lacks the clarity that a separate funding stream would bring. As a result, funding for key workforce and education programs and services could be used for other than their intended purpose – for example, to cover the cost of administering the centers where people go to seek services. Infrastructure funding for the One Stop System should be a separate line item.

With the right approach, millions of unemployed and underemployed Americans – young and old – could be equipped to advance in their careers. H.R. 803 is NOT that approach. We urge you to vote NO on H.R. 803, and then return to the drawing board and craft a bill that can win bipartisan support.

Sincerely,



Mary Kusler  
Director, Government Relations